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A WEDDING PROCESSION, NORWAY

A wedding procession on the water is a common sight in the fiord districts of Norway and Sweden. The bride wears a silver-gilt bridal crown from which hang silver coins and small trinkets. These ring prettily like small bells when the wearer moves. A fiddler and two brides-women accompany the bride.

PICTURESQUE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

MANY marriage customs in foreign countries, especially such as are observed by the peasantry, seem to us most picturesque, or curious, although among the people themselves they are regarded, through long usage, as matters of course.

In Norway, the land of deep fjords and of the descendants of the Vikings, the patriarchal spirit still prevails in the northern districts among the fjords, and even marriages are quite on the patriarchal plan. The youth chooses his bride, who comes to the paternal farm, where she helps the womenfolk in their labours for a year or more before she is definitely married with the patriarch's consent. In the fjords the bridal procession is celebrated in boats on the water, and is often a picturesque scene, heightened by the bright colours of the women's national costumes.

In Finland, the Karelians in the Government of Archangel are extremely fond of society, not only living in large villages, but travelling great distances to visit their neighbours. Every village has its own festival day, when strangers are expected, and every Karelian man and woman who arrives on such occasions is freely entertained. Games and dances are held at these meetings, which are, so to speak, "marriage-markets," and there festivities are, perhaps, more important than the good cheer that is provided. Very often an acquaintance-ship thus formed ends in courtship and a happy marriage.

When a man has seen a girl whom he fancies, he collects his relations, and, accompanied by two or three men, and one woman, usually leaves in the evening for the home of the intended wife. By firing rifles it is announced to every village that a young man is now leaving again to seek for himself a "woolen muffler"—a young bride—and on approaching the intended's home, firing takes place a second time. The bridegroom and his followers walk over at once to the seats of honour, and begin to lay their case before the girl's father and mother.

There is now much bustle in the bride's home, the relations are called together, and begin to discuss the question behind locked doors. The parents have the chief say in the matter, and, after them, the girl's godfather. If the kinsmen agree and the girl leaves, then she bends her knee to the kinsmen, beginning with her father, and says: "You knew to nourish me, so you know also to give me away." The father lights a candle before the cottage ikon, and orders his daughter to extinguish it or let it burn. If the girl does not extinguish the candle, he agrees to her going, and so the union forever is complete, which the nearest male relations of the bride and bridegroom confirm by shaking hands and making money ring in front of the sacred picture. She is then betrothed.

From now on weeping plays a most remarkable rôle in the proceedings.

The bride sits in the women's corner, and on both sides are weepers. From the other side of the cottage the mother comes with weepers. Both groups meet on the floor, and then go to the women's corner, where the betrothal song is wept.

The inviting and giving of wedding-presents takes place to the accompaniment of weeping, one or two professional weepers, assisting the girl. For everybody they have to weep two songs, one of request and one of thanks, and certainly there is need of a throat and a back too, because in weeping the thanks, you must from time to time bend your head to the ground before the giver of the presents. From the house of a rich relative a present is given for every person; all kinds of clothes, silk headgear, shirts, towels, etc.

When the wedding is to take place the bridegroom comes in the morning with some of his kinsfolk to the bride's home, and sits in the farthest-away corner. The bride sits in the women's corner. The bridegroom with his follower steps in front of the bride, bows his head and tells her that he has come to seek her for the wedding. Having said so, they go away. The bride rises up, makes herself ready, eats and drinks. Some old woman is sought for the bride, to act as a guide or "wedding-mother,"

and about five girls are sought to be companions. On the part of the bridegroom, the "wedding-father" with the "wedding-mother" holds with a handkerchief an ikon over the couple, after which all the "wedding-people," altogether about ten persons, bend down on the floor before the ikons, beseeching them to bless the journey.

The bridegroom's men go out first; the bride makes a deep bow to all present in the cottage, requesting them to bless the journey. Before leaving, the



THE COURTSHIP CANDLE

The father lights a candle before the cottage *ikon*. If the daughter lets it burn her suitor is accepted, but if she puts it out he is refused

patvaska (master of ceremonies) performs rites in order to protect the couple from nefarious magic, but he himself, as representing the old superstitious beliefs, does not go to the Christian wedding ceremony. After having walked

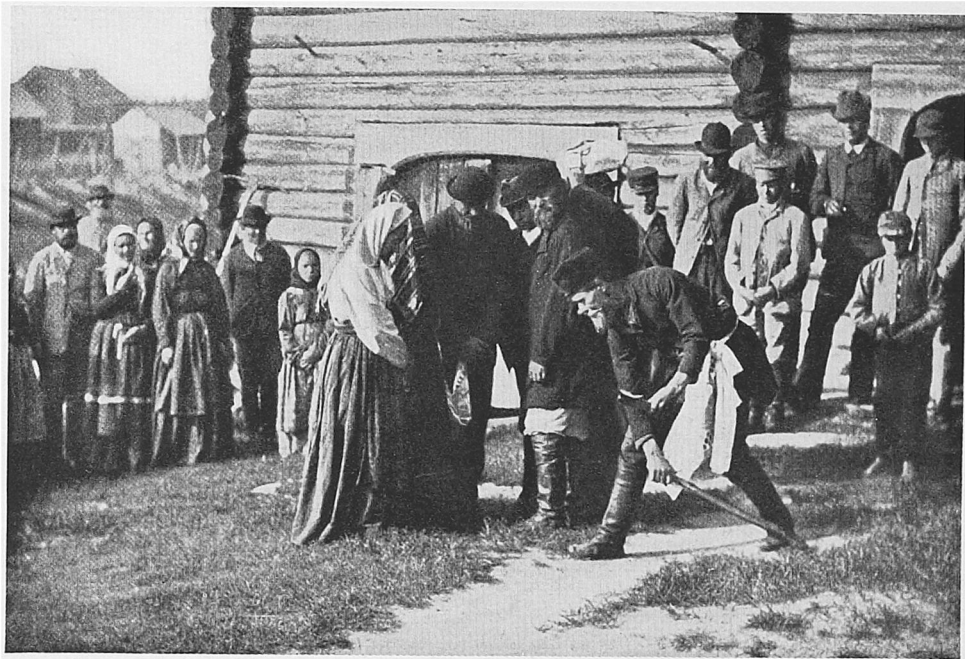
round the couple he lights three bits of amadon, of which the bride and bridegroom must swallow one each; the third is put under a frying-pan which is on the floor.

In the churchyard the bridegroom gives to the bride the head-cloth by which he conveys the bride into the church. All the "wedding-people" come into the church in so dense a crowd that no one could succeed in passing through them. In the church the couple and the "wedding-father" and "wedding-mother" are standing on a calico mat. On the return jour-

ney the bridegroom invites the bride into his house, and all the "wedding-people," if they are living in the same village. If the bridegroom is from a distant village, he has in the village where the wedding takes place some house belonging to a relative or acquaintance as temporary home. The wedding festivities begin on Saturday night. The girls warm the bath-house

til the Karelian wedding ceremonies have been observed. On the other hand, many postpone the ecclesiastical wedding to a suitable occasion, often for months, even a year or more, so that they may have their children baptized at the same time.

All, however, do not continue to wait a whole week, and all do not have means for observing the wedding ceremonies,



THE INCANTATION

The master of ceremonies takes an open knife in his teeth, a burning torch in his left hand and an axe in his right hand. He then walks round the husband's people, making deep cuts in the ground and praying. Despite the fact that this ceremony is a relic of heathenism, before performing it the sign of the cross is made three times

and, weeping, invite the bride into the bath-house, in which a weeping-song, expressed in old, flowery language, is wept.

There are any number of ceremonial troubles and worries the young girl has to go through before she can begin her life together with her husband. But these wedding customs have taken such deep root among the people, that, although the priest may have wedded the couple before, the bride is not allowed to be considered married un-

although not much money is spent in them. They may avail themselves of a custom which may be a survival of capturing wives. The would-be bridegroom goes in front of the woman whom he fancies, bows and offers her a corner of a woman's head-cloth. If she does not take it the third time, it is a sign that she does not like the man. If she takes it and thereby shows her consent, no other ceremonies are required than that some old woman does the girl's hair up into two plaits, presses

a hat on her head, and the bride, the young wife, is thereby ready.

Among part of the peasantry of Russia, when the wedding-day arrives, it is the custom for the bridegroom to come to the bride's house and claim her. Then there follows a very beautiful little ceremony. The bride-to-be kneels before her parents and craves of them pardon for any and every offence or act of disobedience towards them of which she may have been at any time guilty. They raise her to her feet, kiss her, offer her bread and salt, which is symbolical that so long as life lasts they will not see her want the necessities of life, and when she steps forth from the old home to go to her new, the door is left open, to signify that she may return when she will.

The tie between brother and sister is in all parts of Russia one of a very sacred nature. The former considers himself the latter's guardian, and in some instances, when the bridegroom comes to claim his sister, the brother will stand in the way with a staff or drawn sword so as to prevent the bridegroom's approach. This is, of course, a purely formal exhibition of his guard-

ianship of his sister, as, unless the marriage met with the approval of the family, the betrothal would not have taken place. Sometimes the brother will not allow the bridegroom to pass unless he pays a considerable sum which the bride has urged him to extract from the bridegroom as a price for herself, her veil and her beauty.

The marriage ceremony itself is a long and very picturesque one. Towards its close it is the custom to drink wine and water, in commemoration of the wedding at Cana in Galilee. Then the bride and bridegroom follow the priest three times around the altar and kiss each other three times, and also the ikons.

Among the most interesting

and curious sights in Russia are the marriage fairs, which are held in Easter week in the more remote districts. Formerly they were also held in the large towns. It is the custom on these occasions for all the marriageable girls and young men in search of wives to resort to the public square of the village or town, or park, if there be one, and there and then engage upon the important enterprise of choosing their partners for life. The rich men of the



A WEDDING CUSTOM, HARTZ MOUNTAINS

After the marriage ceremony a log of wood has to be sawn by both bride and bridegroom, and according to the success with which they manage this operation, so will their married life be a success or a failure

district naturally have their choice first, and when a girl's face or figure or other qualities please one of these, it is the custom for him to ask her the names and address of her parents. If the girl likes the appearance of the would-be suitor, she gives the required informa-

"given away" but "sold." The parents give her, of course, a dowry proportionate to their means, but, on the other hand, they must receive from the bridegroom's family a compensation in money or kind for the loss of their daughter.



PEASANT WEDDING IN THE GUTACHTHAL

Throughout rural Germany, where on Sundays and holidays the native costumes are still worn by men and women alike, a band plays an important part in the marriage festivities. It is rarely, if ever, a hired band.

tion. If she refuses to do so, it is understood that she declines the implied offer of marriage. Year by year the custom is being dropped more and more by the better class of girls, and, save in the very remote districts, today is chiefly patronized by servants and peasant-girls.

Amongst most of the peoples of Austria-Hungary the bride is not

Even if the young man has already fixed upon his choice and is certain of the girl's acceptance, it is customary to arrange the marriage through the mediation of a special man, and in some places of a special woman, known under various names, but all of them signifying the marriage intermediary or broker. When the proposal is accepted by the girl and her parents, a

day is arranged on which the prospective bridegroom and his parents pay a visit to the girl's house. Although the purpose of this visit is well known, some excuse, such as the buying of cattle or a similar thing, is made. After all the financial and other details have been discussed at length and settled, supper is served. On this occasion, the prospective bridegroom gives the girl a present in the presence of the parents. In some parts it is usual for the young man to bring a calf, which he leaves in the cowshed. This calf is beautifully decorated on the wedding day.

The invitation to the wedding is a very formal affair, and is made by a special man, called "der Hochzeitbitter," that is, the man employed to invite the guests to the wedding. When going on this errand, his hat and stick are decorated with flowers and ribbons, and in inviting each guest he uses a rather long and special formula, which varies slightly in different localities. Speaking of the invitation to the wedding, we will mention a very curious custom which prevails in the district of Wechsel, in Lower Austria. Here the bride herself is also invited to the wedding. The bridegroom, accompanied by the best man, both clad in their gala costume, calls for that purpose at two or three in the morning at the bride's house. On that occasion the bride must not be surprised sleeping, nor must she be found too soon. The first case would signify that she would not make a careful housewife, and the second one that she is too eager to get married. She hides herself, therefore, and the longer the search for her lasts the more honoured she feels.

In most districts the bridegroom and his party go to the bride's house, whence they proceed together to the church. This fetching of the bride to church is accompanied by many curious customs. Thus, in some districts the wedding party finds the gates locked, and it is only admitted after some negotiations have taken place and the bridegroom has thrown over the fence money, which usually contains some old and useless coins. After breakfast has been served to the guests, the bride takes leave of her parents, thanks them for all the favours she has received, asks forgiveness for all the wrongs she has committed, and kneeling down, receives their blessing.

On coming home from church, the wedding party finds the door locked, and the best man has to ask permission from the house guardians, generally two young men, to enter. After this is granted, one of them offers the guests a bottle of wine, and the other presents to the bride a loaf of bread and a wooden knife, and asks her to cut off a piece. The bride is then subjected to a great deal of good-humoured chaff for her predicament; but as she has already foreseen that, she takes out from her pocket a penknife, and cuts off the corner. This she stores carefully away in order that the new household may never suffer from want. She then throws away the wooden knife, taking care to throw it towards the house, not backwards, for this is supposed to bring luck to her house.

The wedding banquet is everywhere a very elaborate affair, and is followed by a dance. In some parts of Upper Austria this is opened by the bride jumping upon the table, which is laden



AN ARAB BRIDE

An Arab bride is not seen by her husband before the marriage is arranged, the negotiations having been conducted by his mother or a friend of hers. The wedding is celebrated with much feasting and "powder-play," and the ceremonies last several days. The bride is usually very handsomely dressed in silks and wears a quantity of gold and silver ornaments, but these are now often of European manufacture.

with dishes, plates, glasses, etc., and walking towards the bridegroom or the best man, taking care not to upset or break anything on the table, for this would be considered a bad omen for her married life.

In Germany, the engagement of a girl is an important affair. Her betrothal is advertised in the papers and pompous cards folded in half are sent around to friends and acquaintances; on the left side of the card the parents of the girl announce their daughter's engagement; on the right side the future bridegroom announces his betrothal. When proposing formally for a girl's hand, the suitor arrives on the scene in frock coat and top hat, and with a bouquet of flowers in his hand. Naturally, the humorous aspect of the "man with the bouquet" has not been lost sight of by wits, with the result that the custom is tending to lose its excessive formality. The binding nature of an engagement officially announced has not altered, however. The wedding-rings—for both man and woman wear them invariably—appear on the "Goldfinger" shortly after the engagement, and are worn on the left hand, being changed to the right after the wedding.

Myrtle, and not orange-blossom, is worn by the bride on her wedding-day. She is generally dressed in black silk, and wears a white veil, which does not, however, cover her face, and a wreath of myrtle crowns her head; the bridegroom, in cultured society, wears full evening-dress. On the afternoon prior to the wedding, the bride's best friend invites her to her house, where several girls are congregated, and the myrtle wreath is woven. This

is presented to the future wife, the while all sing an appropriate chorus, the bridal anthem of the "Freischütz" being the favourite. The eve of the wedding is known as "Polterabend," when the "Poltergeiste," or hobgoblins, are abroad bent on mischief and scandalmongering. To spoil their game, as it were, glasses and crockery are thrown against the door of the house where the bride resides, and, falling to the ground with a crash, prevent the hobgoblins from telling their spiteful tales.

In France, it is especially in the provincial districts that one comes across interesting, picturesque, and often elaborate ceremonies connected with marriage. In Brittany, for example, the wedding of a small farmer's daughter or that of a prosperous village tradesman is often made an occasion for the expenditure of a very considerable amount of money. Far more, indeed, than one would anticipate the families of the contracting parties could afford. Not only are almost innumerable guests invited or invite themselves to the wedding feast, but the junketing is continued for several days in the case of a marriage of the prosperous or well-to-do. One old-time custom in connection with Breton marriages is that of the bridegroom scattering largesse among the crowd of beggar women and children, who habitually congregate around the church doors on such occasions.

The wedding feast is very frequently spread beneath the trees in the main street of the village, beneath those of the Grande Place, or in some convenient field not too far away from a wineshop or the church. Very often the

guests amuse themselves whilst the final preparations of the feast are being made by dancing in the square or along the streets. The bride and bridegroom lead the dance, the best man and bridesmaids and their attendant swains following in close proximity, and the guests joining in as the fancy takes them. The dance is a form of gavotte, and the music is generally supplied by a couple of peasants play-

by the man's mother or by a professional go-between. The man has practically seen nothing of his bride before, unless the couple are ordinary fellahs. Marriages are earlier than in Europe, but child-marriage is unknown. When the marriage is arranged, the eldest male relative of the bride enters upon the scene, to arrange the dowry (*mahr*). When the arranged sum has been paid over, the marriage-contract is signed,



"MARRYING-DAY" AT PLOUGASTEL

At Plougastel a number of couples marry on one day, and then go in procession through the streets. Here are seen the old and the new order contrasted in the attire of the first and second bridegroom.

ing the biniou and a violin, and sometimes a kind of bagpipes, even occasionally a concertina or accordion. The wedding feast, with its huge tankards of cider, plates of meat, and large slices of bread, is prolonged far into the afternoon, and then the bride and bridegroom, bridesmaids and guests begin to dance again, keeping up the festivities far into the night, and often, indeed, continuing them the next day.

There is little question of courtship in Egypt. A marriage is arranged either

or rather agreed to before witnesses, as it is not always written. This is done at the bride's house. Among the Moslems the male representative and the bridegroom sit on the ground and join their hands, over which a fikih places a handkerchief, at the same time saying the prescribed words of betrothal, which the two men repeat after him. A feast follows. About eight or ten days now elapse, during which the bridegroom sends presents every day to the bride, and the furniture she brings

with her is sent to the bridegroom. The bridegroom entertains his friends every night. The bride now makes a state visit to the public bath, walking under a canopy held by her male relatives, and escorted by women who raise shrill wavering cries called *zaghârît*, which are intended to express delight. Returning to her home for the last time, she entertains her friends and relatives and collects monetary contributions from them, passing round a lump of henna into which those invited stick coins. The guests are meanwhile entertained by a company of *almehs* or hired singers. This last evening at home is called the "*henna-night*" (*lêlet el-henna*). On the next evening takes place *zef-fet el-arûseh*, the bridal procession. In towns the bride either walks or rides a donkey beneath a canopy as before; but in the country the *fellah*-bride, especially if she belong to a rich family, rides a stately camel, with a gorgeous tent-like canopy over her head. After her ride musicians with kettledrums, also on camels, and she is accompanied by the whole village on foot. At the bridegroom's house she dismounts, and is often first conducted to a special tent put up outside it, where she sups with her female relatives. Meanwhile, the bridegroom

goes to the mosque accompanied by torchbearers and musicians. On his return, he finds that the bride has taken possession of his house. He enters, and sees his wife alone and face-to-face for the first time. If he takes a dislike to her on the spot, he has his remedy. He has only to pronounce the formula of triple divorce, and is free.

Among various castes in Southern India the essential and binding portion of the marriage rites, on the hand-joining day, is the tying together of the hands of the bride and bridegroom with a cotton thread dyed with turmeric, silk thread, or the sacred *dharba* grass; or the linking of their hands or little fingers, while water is poured over them. Sometimes the



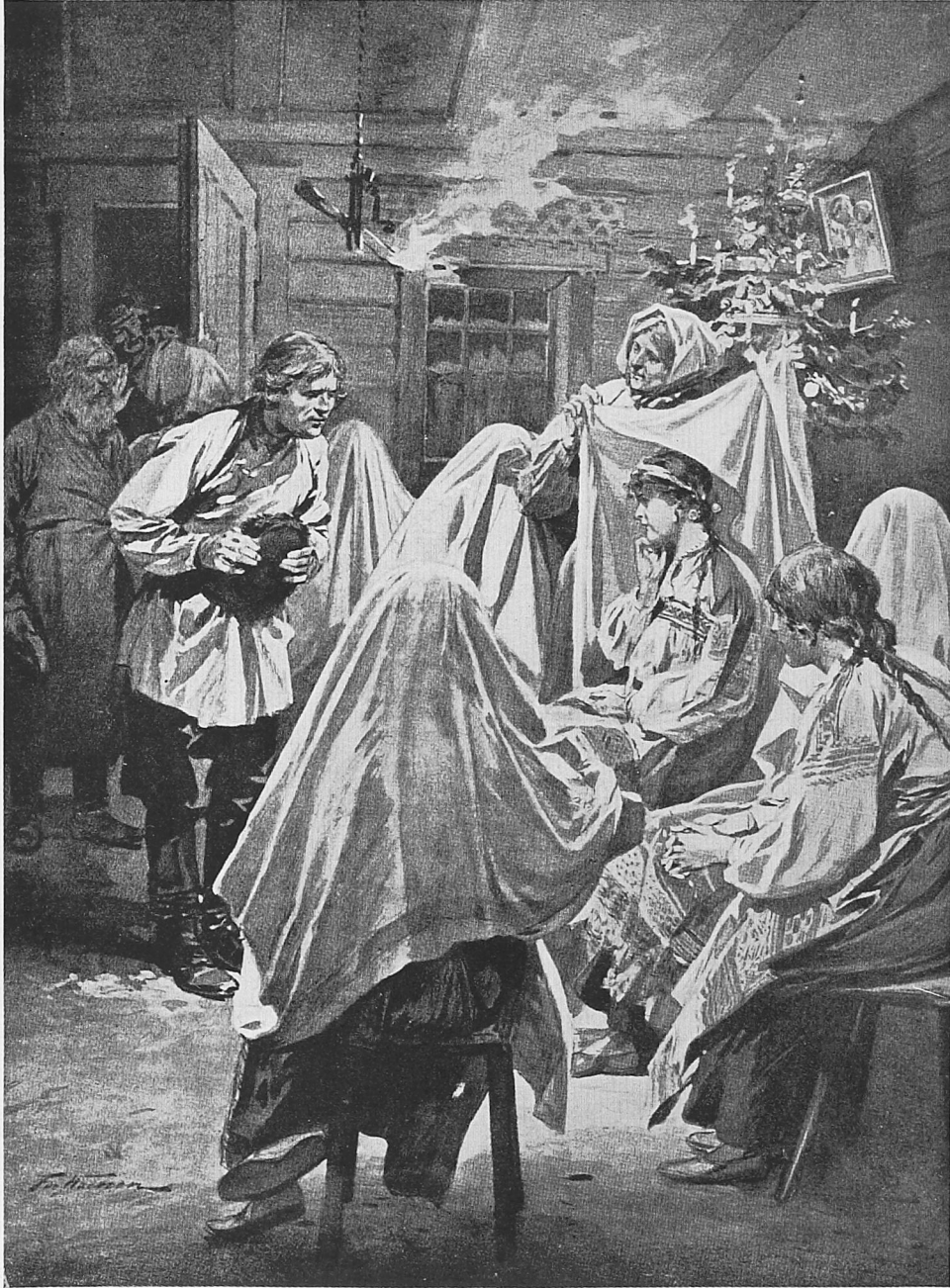
GANIGA BRIDAL COUPLE

A Hindu bridal couple in the Canarese country. The bride is decorated with jewelry and ample body-cloth, and the bridegroom with embroidered waistcoat and smart turban.

hands are united together under a cloth held by the maternal uncles of the couple.

In the Telugu, Canarese, and Oriya countries it is a common custom to interpose a screen or curtain between the bridal couple, over which the bride throws rice or salt on the head of the bridegroom.

These and many other marriage customs will be found described and elaborately illustrated in the two-volume work, "*Customs of the World*," by Walter Hutchinson.



BRIDE-CHOOSING ON CHRISTMAS EVE

On Christmas Eve, in certain villages in Russia, it is the custom for marriageable girls to assemble in the house of the head man. Then the mistress of the house veils each of them. Young men wishing to wed wait outside while this is being done, and are then brought in one after the other, each to bow before one of the veiled figures; whereupon the mistress lifts the covering and the pair become engaged. It is more than probable that in all cases the man is well aware of the identity of the girl he chooses in this manner.